

**REMARKS**

The final Office action mailed on 18 August 2004 (Paper No. 20040816) has been carefully considered. Allowance of claims 1 thru 3, 5 and 6, as set forth in paragraph 8 of the final Office action, is appreciated.

Claims 1, 7, 12, 13, 15 and 16 are being amended. Thus, claims 1 thru 3, 5 thru 13, 15 and 16 are pending in the application.

In paragraph 2 of the Office action, the Examiner objected to claim 12 because the claim does not end with a period. Claim 12 is being amended to correct that error.

In paragraph 4 of the Office action, the Examiner rejected claims 12, 13 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §112 (second paragraph) for alleged indefiniteness. Claim 12 is being amended to recite "a module rack" on line 2. Thus, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112 (second paragraph) should no longer apply.

In paragraph 6 of the Office action, the Examiner rejected claims 7 thru 11 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. §103 for alleged unpatentability over Matsumoto *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 5,621,659 in view of Drucker, U.S. Patent No. 5,591,984. In paragraph 7 of the Office action, the Examiner rejected claims 12, 13 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103 for alleged unpatentability over Matsumoto *et al.* '659 in view of Drucker '984, and further in view of

Lach, U.S. Patent No. 6,363,452. For the reasons stated below, it is submitted that the invention recited in the claims, as now amended, is distinguishable from the prior art cited by the Examiner so as to preclude rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Claims 7, 12 and 16 are being amended to recite in more detail the manner in which a newly installed function-extending module (FEM) is connected to a previously installed FEM, that is, by reciting the respective ports (first and second) of each FEM, as well as the common port of a first switching unit and the selection port of a second switching unit. These recitations are consistent with and similar to the recitations set forth in claim 1, and thus the amendment of claims 7, 12 and 16 should not raise new issues requiring further consideration or search since the recitations in question have already been searched and considered by the Examiner in connection with examination of claim 1.

Furthermore, it is noted that the recitations in question apparently served as a basis for the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowing claims 1 thru 3, 5 and 6, as set forth in paragraph 9 of the Office action. Therefore, the insertion of these recitations into claims 7, 12 and 16 should result in allowance of these claims, especially since the cited prior art does not disclose or suggest the recited "common port" of a "first switching unit" or the recited "selection port" of a "second switching unit", and does not disclose or suggest their interconnection with each other and with the previously installed FEM and newly installed FEM.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the claims of this application are in condition for allowance, and early issuance thereof is solicited. Should any questions remain unresolved, the Examiner is requested to telephone Applicant's attorney.

No fee is incurred by this Amendment After Final.

Respectfully submitted,



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